

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 CU-02 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 PC-01 /074 W

-----201153Z 111055 /10

R 191646Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1670

INFO AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PGOV, IV

SUBJ: STUDENT STRIKE: DIALOGUE TRIUMPHS AGAIN

REF: ABIDJAN 474

1. SESSION OF NATIONAL COUNCIL CALLED TO DISCUSS STUDENT PROBLEMS COLSED JANUARY 18, FOLLOWING WHICH FIVE SUSPENDED STUDENTS MADE PUBLIC APOLOGY TO UNIVERSITY FACULTY AND WERE REINSTATED. SECONDARY SCHOOLS WILL OPEN TOMORROW, JAN 20, AND UNIVERSITY ITSELF ON JAN 21. PRESS AND OTHER MEDIA ARE HAILING TRIUMPH OF DIALOGUE AND BROTHERHOOD, THE "DESPAIR OF THOSE WHO WISH US ILL," AND HOUPHOUET'S SAGACITY AND CLEMENCY. CRISIS, IF THERE REALLY WAS ONE, IS APPARENTLY OVER.

2. NEVERTHELESS, THIS PECULIAR AND SOMEWHAT UNSETTLING EPISODE LEAVES SEVERAL QUESTIONS UNANSWERED. ABIDJAN'S UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, AS HOUPHOUET POINTED OUT, ARE

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PROBABLY THE BEST TREATED IN AFRICA. THOUGH EMBASSY HAS NO EVIDENCE OF OUTSIDE INSTIGATION, STUDENT SOLIDARITY AND ORGANIZATION IN BOYCOTTING CLASSES OVER DISCIPLINARY SANCTIONS IS SURPRISING AND SUGGESTS UNDERLYING DISCONTENT WITH UNIVERSITY OR EVEN POSSIBLY WITH IVORIAN SOCIETY. SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS GENERALLY TREATED AFFAIR AS UNEXPECTED HOLIDAY, BUT RAPID SPREAD OF BOYCOTT IN AND

BEYOND ABIDJAN IS DISQUIETING. GOIC HANDLING OF PROBLEM IN HOUPHOUET'S ABSENCE WAS NERVOUS AND CLUMSY, SHOWING OCCASIONAL INCLINATION TO PANIC (AS IN WHIPPING SEVERAL TEEN-AGE GIRLS). MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION IS WHETHER ANYONE BESIDES HOUPHOUET WOULD HAVE THE PRESTIGE, JUDGEMENT, AND WISDOM TO SETTLE SO QUICKLY AND CALMLY A STORM WHICH SHOWED SIGNS OF ESCAPING THE TEAPOT.

3. EPISODE MAY APPEAR OF EXAGGERATED IMPORTANCE IN USUALLY PLACID IVORIAN SCENE. EMBASSY BELIEVES, AS REPORTED ELSEWHERE THAT IVORIAN INSTITUTIONS ARE BASICALLY STRONG AND RESILIENT, PARTICULARLY IN WEST AFRICAN CONTEXT. SCHOOL STRIKE DEMONSTRATES, HOWEVER, THAT IVORY COAST CAN BE VULNERABLE, AND ONCE AGAIN EMPHASIZES THE WELL-NIGHT INDISPENSABLE ROLE THAT HOUPHOUET-LE VIEUX-PLAYS IN THIS COUNTRY.
STEARNS

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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